

# STOREFRONT

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

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## FREESPACE PROJECTS

by

**LEBBEUS WOODS**

**Exhibition Schedule: 4 May to 11 June, 1994**

**Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11 AM to 6 PM**

**Opening Reception: Wednesday, 4 May 6-8 PM**

This is the first New York exhibition in six years of the works of the American architect Lebbeus Woods, and marks his return to the StoreFront for Art and Architecture, where he exhibited his architectural *Cycle Centricity*, in 1988.

The present exhibition presents drawings and models of projects made for three European capitals whose rapid and sometimes violent transformations seem to be at the forefront of social and political changes affecting cities everywhere. In his *Berlin Free-Zone* (1990), *Zagreb Free-Zone* (1991), *War and Architecture Series* (1992-93) and *Sarajevo Projects* (1994), Woods develops his concept of 'freespace' as a direct architectural engagement with the fluidity, unpredictability and uncertainty of contemporary urban life.

These qualities, which Woods sees as the by-products of freedoms resulting from changes in the nature of knowledge, demand new conceptions of designed space. "Freespace," writes Woods, "is a new spatial manifestation of individual autonomy. It is not interpreted by a social group in the form of a pre-determined function or programme that is *named*, but only an individual set of actions, purposes, meanings—Freespace—like freedom itself is inherently useless and meaningless."



The free-zone is the urban network of freespaces which, through advanced communications technology, is charged with a social potential that can be realized only by the people who occupy and use it. This network is what Woods calls a 'heterarchy,' or 'a landscape of shifting authority, based on the constant interaction of its inhabitants.' This is radically opposed to current concepts of architectural and urban design, which are controlled by an established hierarchy of authority, dictating in advance how spaces in the city are to be designed and used.

Woods envisions for the freespaces and free-zones new architectural principles, and also new forms that are "difficult to occupy," and therefore challenge conventional modes of thinking and living, "Freespaces are not for everyone," Woods states, "but only those who feel most acutely the crisis of change, and are already changed by." In his project, this architect contends that architecture can and should be an instrument of the most difficult personal and social transformations.

When the war broke out in Croatia and then in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Woods—who had exhibited his free-zone projects for Berlin and Zagreb in these cities in early 1991, began to consider the interrelationship of war and architecture in a series of drawings which he refers to as 'meditations.' These explore visually the destructive changes brought to urban landscapes by war and challenge the conventional notion that architecture is purely a constructive art. This series culminates in a set of principles for rebuilding war-damaged buildings and towns, as well as design techniques such as 'the injection,' 'the scab,' 'the scar,' and 'new tissue.' In November of 1993, he presented these ideas in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In March of this year, he returned to Sarajevo to conduct a workshop concerned with developing concepts and strategies for that devastated city's reconstruction. At this time he also presented his own projects for Sarajevo, a reconstruction of the Assembly buildings and the 'highhouses.'

The fifty drawings and four models in this exhibition are seen in New York City for the first time.

Lebbeus Woods is co-founder of the Research Institute for Experimental Architecture (RIEA) and a Visiting Professor of Architecture at the Cooper Union in New York City. He has also been a Visiting Professor at the Southern California Institute of Architecture



(SCI-ARC), Columbia and Harvard Universities. He is a writer and critic whose many published articles on architecture include commentaries on the works of Louis Kahn, the Soviet and Russian Avant-Garde, Raimund Abraham and Zaha Hadid. He has lectured internationally. Recent monographs on his work include Lebbeus Woods: Terra Nova (architecture and Urbanism, 1991), Anarchitecture: Architecture is a Political Act (Academy Editions/St. Martin's Press, 1992), and War and Architecture (Princeton Architectural Press, 1993). Lebbeus Woods lives and works in New York City.